

Broadband Budget Summary: FY 2021-2022 Appropriation Act

SECTION 73.6 - 73.7 - R060 - OFFICE OF REGULATORY STAFF

The Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Appropriations Act establishes the basis for broadband expansion in South Carolina by creating the Office of Broadband Coordinator within the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS), expanding mapping efforts, and extending funding opportunities to companies that deploy broadband in specific areas of need.



Office of Broadband Coordinator

The Office of Broadband Coordinator will serve as the central broadband planning body for South Carolina and will coordinate with federal, state, regional, local, and private entities, to the extent practicable, to encourage the continued development of access to broadband. The Office of Broadband Coordinator will serve as a central resource to collect and publish information about state and federal programs to fund broadband expansion and will help maximize resources by coordinating with other state and federal programs.



Broadband Planning

Through a collaborative stakeholder process, the Office of Broadband Coordinator will identify challenges to expediting broadband access. A report will be provided to the General Assembly with recommendations on actions that can be taken to promote broadband access.



Funding for Broadband Infrastructure Projects

Broadband infrastructure projects, including those that were approved for funding pursuant to Act 142 of 2020, but not constructed by December of 2020, will be completed through the Broadband Infrastructure Program. Priority will be given to unserved homes, businesses, schools, health-care facilities, and other institutions in rural communities and communities across South Carolina with a lack of access to broadband.



Broadband Mapping

The Office of Broadband Coordinator will collect information from broadband providers and other entities to update the State Broadband Map. All information provided will be confidential, proprietary, and a trade secret and subject to exemption from disclosure under state and federal law. The information is not subject to the Freedom of Information Act, except in the form of a map that does not reveal provider-specific information.

On an annual basis, entities providing broadband service or middle-mile infrastructure in South Carolina will provide deployment data to the Office of Broadband Coordinator. If an entity does not provide this data on an annual basis, it may be disqualified from state funding opportunities for the current fiscal year. Each year, the Office will compile this information, analyze, and update statewide broadband deployment information.

AT A GLANCE

- Establishes the Office of Broadband Coordinator within the ORS
- Creates a central resource for information on state and federal programs to fund broadband expansion
- Maximizes resources by coordinating with other state and federal programs
- Directs the ORS to convene a collaborative stakeholder process for broadband planning and deliver a report to the General Assembly
- Provides funding to expand broadband infrastructure through the Broadband Infrastructure Program
- Introduces a framework for collecting the information necessary to update the State Broadband Map and safeguards broadband provider information

